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SUBJECT: SHEIKH HAMMOUDI TELLS CODEL SHAYS WHEN U.S. CAN
WITHDRAW TROOPS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT FORD FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: On October 9, TNA Constitution Committee Chair and senior Shia Islamist politician Sheikh Humam Hammoudi told Representatives Christopher Shays (R, CT), Michael McNulty (D, NY), Earl Pomeroy (D, ND), Michael Campuano (D, MA), Ron Kind (D, WI), and Eni Faleomavaega (D, American Samoa) the U.S. should not withdraw its troops from Iraq until the Iraq Police (IP) and Security Forces (ISF) are capable of securing Iraq on their own. Hammoudi said that the rights of women would be guaranteed by the draft constitution, and warned that some of Iraq's neighbors do not want Iraq to succeed in its democratic experiment. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Sheikh Hammoudi told CODEL Shays that Iraqis want the U.S. military to withdraw from Iraq as quickly as possible, but not before Iraq is secure. He claimed that training given to IP and ISF has been weak and inadequate; they are not yet ready to take over all security duties in Iraq. When they are ready, Hammoudi said, Coalition Forces could simply support IP and ISF as needed, with an eye to withdrawing completely soon thereafter.

3. (C) Hammoudi insisted that the draft constitution would guarantee women's rights. On the matter of personal status law, he said that just as in Lebanon, when an Iraqi couple marries, they retain the right to decide whether to do so according to civil or religious law. This decision, Hammoudi said, would determine how any marital disputes, including divorce, are adjudicated.

4. (C) Hammoudi told CODEL Shays that Iraq is now free to make decisions regarding its future. Issues such as whether Iraq will have a strong ruler or decentralized government will eventually be determined. He warned, however, of meddling by Iraq's neighbors, noting that "forces in Iraq's environs" want to prevent a stable and peaceful Iraq from developing. (Comment: Hammoudi in the past has evidenced deep suspicion of Arab states' intervening in Iraqi affairs. End Comment.)
Khalilzad